

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 01027

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FOR GARRISON FROM MATLOCK

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OGEN
SUBJECT: OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

1. WHEN I SAW KOMPLEKTOV YESTERDAY HE TOOK ME ASIDE AT END OF CONVERSATION TO ASK ABOUT PRESS PLAY ON WATER SITUATION. I ASSURED HIM THAT WE HAD NOT SOUGHT PRESS ATTENTION BUT WERE OBLIGATED TO NOTIFY AMERICANS IN BUILDINGS IN QUESTION AND THEREFORE IT NOT SURPRISING THAT MATTER EVENTUALLY REACHED ATTENTION OF LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS. HE TOOK MY EXPLANATION IN UNCHARACTERISTIC GOOD HUMOR, BUT POINTED OUT THAT STORIES FROM WASHINGTON THAT HIGH READINGS WERE PROBABLY THE RESULT OF CONTAMINATION OF SAMPLE COULD BE INTERPRETED BY SOME TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WHOLE INCIDENT WAS CONTRIVED TO EMBARRASS SOVIETS. I OF COURSE ASSURED HIM THAT THERE WAS NO SUCH INTENT AT ALL AND TOLD HIM THAT I DID NOT KNOW ON WHAT BASIS THE "SAMPLE CONTAMINATION" THEORY HAD BEEN ADVANCED; CERTAINLY THERE WAS NONE AT THIS END. I TOLD HIM THAT WE ARE RELIEVED THAT OUR RECENT SAMPLES TESTED OUT ALL RIGHT, BUT WE HOPED THAT THE MOSCOW WATER-SUPPLY AUTHORITIES WOULD MONITOR THE SITUATION CLOSELY.

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2. KOMPLEKTOV'S REMARKS HIGHLIGHT OUR EARLIER CONCERN WITH THIS "SAMPLE CONTAMINATION" EXPLANATION. WHAT, INDEED, IS THE BASIS FOR IT? AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, THE CONTAINERS USED WERE THE ONES RECEIVED IN SEALED POLYETHYLENE FROM MED, AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT CONTAINERS SPECIFICALLY PRODUCED FOR TAKING WATER SAMPLES AND SEALED WOULD HAVE BEEN CONTAMINATED IN ADVANCE. THE SAMPLES WERE

TAKEN AND SEALED HERE IN ACCORD WITH INSTRUCTIONS. THEREFORE, IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE LOCALE FOR CONTAMINATION WAS THE TESTING LABORATORY ITSELF. DO THEY HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THEY CONTAMINATED THE SAMPLE? IF SO, WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN TOLD THIS AT THE OUTSET. IF NOT, THEN THIS EXPLANATION SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ADVANCED. (THE MORE PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION WOULD SEEM TO BE SEEPAGE INTO THE WATER PIPES FROM CONTAMINATED GROUND WATER.)

3. TO CONFUSE FURTHER A MURKY SITUATION, MARK HOPKINS TELLS US THAT WHEN THE STORY FIRST BROKE, VOA CHECKED FACTS REGARDING STANDARDS AND EFFECTS WITH WHO OFFICIALS IN GENEVA AND WITH EPA IN WASHINGTON. THEY FOUND THAT WHO CLAIMED THAT ITS STANDARD IS IN FACT LOWER THAN THAT MENTIONED IN THE LABORATORY REPORT, THAT THAT EPA SPECIALISTS SPECULATED THAT THE MOST LIKELY SOURCE OF THIS SORT OF CONTAMINATION IS INDUSTRIAL WASTE, AND THAT THE LEVELS INDICATED WOULD BE CAUSE OF MEDICAL CONCERN IF THEY PREVAILED FOR "DAYS OR WEEKS," ESPECIALLY IN THE CASE OF CHILDREN, WHO CONSUME MORE WATER PER WEIGHT THAN DO ADULTS. NONE OF THIS WAS APPARENTLY USED BY VOA SINCE IT CONFLICTED WITH OTHER REPORTS, BUT MARK HAS DISCUSSED IT WITH SEVERAL PEOPLE HERE. IN SUM, EVERYONE IS RELIEVED THAT THE LATEST SAMPLES DID NOT HAVE THE CONTAMINANTS, BUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR HAS UNFORTUNATELY LEFT AN IMPRESSION OF CONFUSION AND LACK OF CLOSE ATTENTION AT HOME. IT WOULD THEREFORE BE MOST USEFUL TO RECEIVE A FULLER EXPLANATION OF WHY WE THINK THE SAMPLE WAS CONTAMINATED, WHY THIS FACT

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WAS NOT MENTIONED EARLIER, AS WELL AS A RECONFIRMATION THAT THE WHO STANDARD IS AS WAS STATED IN THE INITIAL LABORATORY REPORT.

4. RE PARA 7, STATE 14550, I AM NOT AWARE THAT WE ARE SAMPLING WATER ANYWHERE EXCPET WHERE USG EMPLOYEES LIVE, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT DOCTOR AUTHORIZED SAMPLES AT OTHER LOCATIONS WHERE US CITIZENS LIVE. I'LL CHECK WITH HIM MONDAY. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE BASIS OF THE REFERENCE TO A REPORT TO THE WHITE HOUSE COULD BE, ALTHOUGH THOUGHTS ALONG THESE LINES MAY HAVE BEEN IN THE REPORT OUR TEAM HERE DREW UP LAST JANUARY.

5. KOMPLEKTOV ALSO MENTIONED TO ME PRIVATELY SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT YESENIN-VOLPIN'S SUIT AGAINST TASS. HE SAID IT WOULD FACILITATE "MUTUAL CONFIDENCE" IF WE COULD QUASH CASE. I TOLD HIM THAT I KNEW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THE MATTER, BUT IF IT WAS AS I UNDERSTOOD A PRIVATE ACTION BY YESENIN-VOLPIN, THEN THERE WOULD BE

NO WAY FOR THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO EXERT INFLUENCE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. I DO NOT THINK I NEED TO REPLY TO KOMPLEKTOV, BUT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE A RUN-DOWN ON THE CASE FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION IN CASE KOMPLEKTOV MENTIONS IT AGAIN.

6. KIEV: IN OUR DISCUSSION REGARDING NEW YORK/KIEV PROBLEMS, KOMPLEKTOV DID NOT MENTION THE STATUS OF THE TWO TDY EMPLOYEES, BUT HE WAS EXPLICIT IN CONFIRMING THAT THE 3-4 EXTRA POSITIONS THEY WANT IS ON TOP OF TEN, NOT TWELVE. YOU MAY WISH TO CLARIFY THIS POINT WITH THE SOVIET EMBASSY, SINCE KOMPLEKTOV'S FORMULA IMPLIES THAT TDY PAIR WOULD NOT BE GIVEN PERMANENT STATUS.

7. RE SIMONS SLOT, GO AHEAD WITH SCENARIO YOU SUGGEST IF FUERTH SEEMS TO BE THE STRONGEST CANDIDATE. (WE RECEIVED CURIOUS PER MESSAGE TODAY ASKING US TO SHIFT COMBS CONFIDENTIAL

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TO SIMONS POSITION, BUT LEAVING COMBS IN CHARGE OF INTERNAL. THIS MAKES NO SENSE BECAUSE BOTH INT AND EXT CHIEFS ARE O-3 POSITIONS; THERE IS NO NEED TO CHANGE COMBS' POSITION TO MAKE HIM NUMBER TWO IN POLITICAL SECTION, SINCE WHICHEVER UNIT CHIEF IS SENIOR AUTOMATICALLY BECOMES DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR. WE WILL TAKE UP DIRECTLY WITH PER.)

8. WOULD APPRECIATE BUREAU ANSWERING CABLE ABOUT MY TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION SOONEST SO THAT TICKETS CAN BE PURCHASED, ETC. I OF COURSE UNDERSTAND THAT IF CIRCUMSTANCES NECESSITATE I WILL POSTPONE OR COME BACK EARLY. (I WILL NEVER BE MORE THAN 2-3 HOURS AWAY FROM MOSCOW.) ACCORDING TO EX, CABLE IS ON JACK'S DESK.

9. SONTAG LOOKS FINE FOR SUMMER.
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